



When Congressman Pitts traveled to Thailand in January he was able to meet with girls from a variety of ethnic tribes at the New Life Center. These girls are encouraged to make dolls and other traditional items from their tribes. This little doll was made by some of the girls.

It is important that we know what is going on around the world so that we can help children, women and men who are trafficked. I encourage you to look at the websites of organizations listed above or contact Karin Finkler in my office if you would like further information about how to get involved in stopping this horrible scourge of trafficking in persons.

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Human Rights Report

from Congressman Joe Pitts

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Sixteenth Congressional District of Pennsylvania

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

One of today's major human rights violations and fastest growing crimes in the world is that of trafficking in persons. Last year's U.S. government estimates are that between 700,000 and four million men, women, and children are trafficked each year into the sex industry and/or slave-like labor conditions and between 50-100,000

women are trafficked into the United States each year. This year, the State Department's June 2003 *Trafficking in Persons Report* estimates that approximately 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked each year into the sex industry and/or slave-like labor conditions. Other United States government reports estimate that between 18-20,000 victims are trafficked into the U.S. each year. The difference in estimates reflects the difficulty in tracking victims of this transnational crime. Trafficking is often for the purposes of forced sexual servitude, but it can also be for forced labor. Women, children and men are trafficked. In some Persian Gulf States, young boys are trafficked to serve as camel jockeys – as the petrified child, who is tied to the camel's back, screams in terror, it makes the



In May, Congressman Pitts chaired a hearing of the Human Rights Subcommittee to address human trafficking,

camels run faster in races.

In India, many young girls and boys are trafficked into the infamous red light district in Bombay. And, in other nations, people are trafficked and forced to labor in harmful conditions – similar to prison camps. It is vital that as the issue of trafficking is analyzed, we, particularly the United States Government, remain focused on the individuals affected by this terrible crime.

In April of this year, I held the 16th Congressional District's annual Human Rights Conference at Lancaster Christian and Missionary Alliance Church to provide further information on trafficking in persons. Our expert

panelists included speakers from *The Protection Project* at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, the *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*, *International Justice Mission*, and *JustLaw International*. In addition, we had additional information from a number of organizations which specialize in various

aspects of assisting those affected by trafficking, including *New Life Center*, *Shared Hope*, *Northwest Family Life Center*, the *Coalition Against Trafficking in Women*, and *Vital Voices*.

The number of international human rights, humanitarian, social, legal, health, economic, and criminal issues intertwined with the issue of trafficking is mind-boggling. To examine the scope of these issues and their connection to trafficking, on June 25, 2003, I chaired a hearing of the House International Relations Subcommittee on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Human Rights. It is vital that governments around the world address these issues strongly and strategically. It is also important, however, that non-governmental organizations, including faith-based organizations, and the American people are

Continued on page 2...

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Continued from page 1...

involved in stopping trafficking and in assisting the victims of trafficking. The *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000*, passed by the U.S. Congress, addresses some of the issues trafficking victims face – in some countries, the victims, not the criminals are arrested when brothels are raided. One important issue the U.S. and other nations must consider when fighting trafficking is the question of what to do with victims of trafficking. The quality of aftercare dramatically impacts whether or not an individual is able to return to living a normal life in society.

In January of this year, I visited the *New Life Center* in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and saw the wonderful impact the work of people like Rev. Bethell and others had on the lives of young girls. During that visit, I also traveled to the Thai-Burma border in January and met with NGOs, refugees, and government officials. One of the most heart-wrenching aspects of the journey was a visit to a refugee orphanage. There we listened to stories about the tragedy in these young lives.

An eight-year-old boy, who could not smile, had lost both parents, was then trafficked across the border to Thailand, somehow escaped from his "owners," and reached the relative safety of the refugee camps. Many children are at risk. Reports from NGOs working with victims reveal a need for further resources, particularly shelters and safe houses for the victims. Trafficking victims often need to recover from a host of physical and emotional health issues.

There is a strong correlation between an environment of domestic violence and its impact on those who later become victims of trafficking. One key approach to fighting trafficking is to urge governments, through law enforcement and other means, to condemn domestic violence; this violence is NOT simply an internal family matter – it deeply affects a society. Other issues that must be addressed in bringing change to an environment that supports trafficking are the lack of proper registration for children at the time of birth, early marriage, "temporary" marriage, forced marriage, quick divorce, the vulnerability in certain societies of widows and orphans without male protection, women in conflict zones, and the actions of international military or peacekeeping operations which often utilize the services provided by traffickers.

Once a victim has had time to recover, the question of where the victims should reside needs to be addressed. Too often, victims

cannot return home because of the humiliation they would face (Some nations go so far as to stamp the passport of the victim with terminology such as "illegal alien deported back to country for serving as a prostitute." This humiliation further victimizes the individual). In addition, returned victims would be threatened by members of organized crime rings who originally trafficked, and are ready to re-traffick, the victim. The U.S. must work with other governments to fight trafficking in persons in the same way they cooperatively fight organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism as all the crimes are closely linked.

The State Department's *Trafficking in Persons Report* ranks countries according to their concrete actions to fight trafficking. The worst offenders are placed in Tier 3 and are subject to sanctions if improvements in fighting trafficking have not occurred by October of this year.

This eight-year-old boy (arms folded) could not smile. He had lost both parents, was trafficked across the border to Thailand, somehow escaped from his "owners," and reached the relative safety of the refugee camps.



HIV/AIDS



In April, Congressman Pitts invited experts in human trafficking to the district to discuss trafficking with his constituents.

who is case aside turns to prostitution to survive."

Traditional methods of deterrence of the spread of HIV/AIDS, such as condom distribution, do not work in the trafficking/sex industry arena in which women, girls and boys are not allowed to negotiate safe sex – those in positions of sexual servitude have no power in their encounters with their customers. In the shadow markets where trafficking takes place, men often pay more to have unprotected sex or sex with underage girls (virgins), partly because of a widespread myth that sex with a virgin cures HIV/AIDS.

In addition, women and children who are displaced in conflict situations and end up as refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) or women who are widowed are at risk of being sexually assaulted in their own communities or of being trafficked and then forced into prostitution. A 2002 study by Physicians for Human Rights reported that in Sierra Leone, in interviews with 991 women in IDP camps, 17% had experienced sexual violence, half of the violence was from combatants and half from non-combatants.

Visit Congressman Pitts' Human Rights page at:
<http://www.house.gov/pitts/rights.htm>

Congressman Pitts and Lord David Alton meet here with tribal girls at the New Life Center in Thailand.

